



Reinstating the Combat Tanker Badge

by Captain Shawn Monien

Sergeant Johnny Graves served as an armor crewman with 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment in the Republic of Vietnam. His unit conducted operations primarily in the area between the Cambodian border and Saigon, an area where some of the most severe fighting during the years 1967 and 1968 took place. He was awarded the Silver Star and two Bronze Stars for valor during the Viet Cong's Tet Offensive in early February 1968.

Prior to reporting for duty at Fort Knox, Kentucky (following his combat tour in Vietnam), Johnny went on a much-deserved leave at his home in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. His parents and fiancée met him at the train station. While on the way to the family house, Johnny's father commented that Johnny must have had a plush assignment in Vietnam because he had not been awarded the Combat Infantryman Badge. Mr. Graves' felt that infantrymen were the only soldiers who really saw combat and were, therefore, the only men who could be called soldiers. The fact that tankers had no combat badge proved that they never really were engaged in combat. His father's comments were the first of many similar remarks Johnny was to hear from the veterans in Oshkosh. Each time Johnny was forced to endure the resulting humiliation because he did not know why there was not a combat badge for armor.

Even after Johnny embarked on his duties at Fort Knox, he relived again and again the humiliation he had felt when asked why he had not been in the fighting in Vietnam. Apparently, his decorations for valor meant less to Americans than a combat badge.¹

The debate over the Combat Armor Badge (CAB) and the Expert Armor Badge (EAB) has raged for decades. The issue has been brought forward during the tenure of every Army Chief of Staff since World War I. There is however a new twist to the ongoing debate — there is no need to adopt new badges — we need to simply *reinstate* the armor badges.

My journey through the 85-year history of the CAB/EAB debate starts at the Patton Museum at Fort Knox, Kentucky. As curator Charles Lemons leads me up the stairway to one of the museum's storage rooms, I am a bit nervous and a bit excited. Does he actually have what my armor and cavalry comrades and I are seeking, or will it be yet another dead-end in our journey?

Charles opens the closet and starts handing me shadow boxes to set on the table. The first two hold personal items of General George S. Patton. This sends shivers up my spine since I am within inches of items that he carried in his pocket throughout World War I, the creation of the Tank Corps, and World War II. I then come back to reality and realize that this is not why I am here. The third shadow box is laid in front of me and my heart starts to race a little faster. Charles points to it and says, "There it is." In front of me lays the original Combat Tanker Badge from World War I — the World Wars Tank Corps Badge. My journey and quest has ended, now it was time to recount the history of the previous 85 years.

You heard me correctly, I just said, "Combat Tanker Badge." The history of this badge is sketchy at best, and trying to chase down a paper trail half-a-century later is even more complicated since the Tank Corps was abolished as a result of the National

Defense Act of 1920. The following is a 1949 account from the Honorable William C. Bray (World War I tank veteran) and at the time a 7th District Congressman from Indiana. His narrative of a letter he received from the War Department will add some clarity to the badge's history:

"United States tankmen of 1918 who served in the organized American fighting Tank Corps are entitled to wear the 'Combat Tanker Badge' according to the announcement from the Department of the Army, Quartermaster General's Office, Washington D.C., 1948. National Commander Clyde D. Burger, Marion Station, Pennsylvania, of the World Wars Tank Corps Association has received notification [that] tankmen of the Heavy Mark I tank and small Whippet tanks are entitled to the 'Combat Tanker Decoration.'"

Armor tricolors are carried out in the original design. The large Mark I tank is carried out in yellow background, lettering of, "WORLD WARS TANK CORPS," in blue and outlines of red, representing red for artillery, blue for infantry, and yellow for cavalry. The original Tank Corps was to supplement those three branches of the Army, in fast moving advance, through enemy lines, which was the Hindenberg Line, proving their success in 1918.

Retired Lieutenant General Floyd D. Franks and Retired Sergeant Frank C. Thomas, both of Washington D.C., presented the badge request to the War Department. Both manned tanks in the First Brigade at St. Mihiel, France in 1918. The World Wars Tank Corps Association was founded in France in 1918 following the St. Mihiel tank battle, the first time American tankers faced enemy fire.²

The Quartermaster General assumed responsibility for Army awards in 1924 and handed the function back to the Army and the Institute of Heraldry in August of 1960. At present, the two functions are trying to research the authorization documentation from 1948 that establishes the Tank Corps Badge for the World War Tanker or "Tankerine" veterans. Perhaps the proper documentation and correspondences will never be found to substantiate the validity of the World War I badge. One thing can be assured — at least our World War I tank veterans, on hearing the news of 1948, finally realized their dream of an authorized Combat Tanker Badge — and passed on to Fiddler's Green in honor.

A Chronological History

The debate over the institution of a Combat Armor Badge was revived during the Korean War with an article in the February-March 1953 issue of the *Tankerine* titled, "Why Not A Combat Tankers Badge?" In this article, a group of World War I and World War II tank veterans propose a standard to govern the awarding of what they called the "Combat Tanker's Badge" and the "Expert Tanker's Badge."

1953 — The *Tankerine*

"Why Not A Combat Tankers Badge?"

"The following suggestions for a combat tanker award for the officers and men of the United States Military Armor (Tankers) for which no decoration presently distinguishes them, has been offered from a group of the 'Original Tankers of 1918,' men who

served with General George S. Patton, Jr., General Crittenger, and other Armor leaders in World War II, and those of the Korean affair:

Combat Tankers Badge

Eligibility Requirements:

- (1) An individual must be an armored officer or enlisted man, or a warrant officer with an Armor MOS who, subsequent to 6 December 1941, has satisfactorily performed duty while assigned or attached as a member of an armored unit of regimental or smaller size during any period such unit was engaged in active ground combat. Awards of this badge will not be made to the members of headquarters companies of units larger in size than regiments. Battle participation credit alone is not sufficient; the unit must have been in active ground combat with the enemy during the period.
- (2) Any officer whose basic branch is other than armor who, under appropriate orders, has commanded an armored unit of regimental or smaller size for at least 30 consecutive days is deemed to have been detailed in Armor and is eligible for the award of 'Combat Tankers Badge,' not withstanding absence of written orders detailing him in Armor, provided all other requirements for such award have been met. Orders directing the individual to assume command will be confirmed in writing at the earliest practicable date.
- (3) One combat tankers badge is authorized to be awarded to each individual for each separate war in which the requirements prescribed herein have been met.

Description:

- (1) First award: a polished silver tank on a triangular red, yellow, and blue background one inch in height in front of an oxidized oak wreath inclosing the wreath to be two inches in width. The word 'COMBAT' to be inscribed in silver on a yellow scroll below the triangle.
- (2) Second award: same as (1) above with one Silver Star centered at the top of the Badge on the point of the triangle.
- (3) Third award: same as (1) above with two silver stars centered at the ends of the oak wreath.
- (4) Fourth award: same as (1) above with three silver stars, one star centered at the top of the badge on the point of the triangle, and two silver stars centered at the ends of the oak wreath.

Expert Tank Badge

Eligibility Requirements:

An individual must be an armor officer or enlisted man, or a warrant officer with Armor MOS who has satisfactorily completed the proficiency test prescribed by Army regulations while assigned to an Armored unit of regimental or smaller size.

Who May Award:

Commanding officers of armored and infantry regiments, separate tank battalions, and separate tank companies.

Description:

A polished silver tank on a triangular, red, yellow, and blue background, one inch in height, with the word 'EXPERT' inscribed in silver on a yellow scroll below the triangle.

ORIGINAL TANKMEN, who served in the First American Expeditionary in France and Germany in 1918, shall be awarded [in addition to the Tank Corps Badge] the above 'COMBAT TANKERS BADGE.'

Indiana Congressman William A. Bray, and a member of the World Wars Tank Corps Association, a combat tank veteran of

World War II and Korea, while sponsoring a measure before Congress to establish the tank badges for veterans, which is being sponsored by the World Wars Tank Corps."³

1952 — *ARMOR*, Letter to the Editor "Armor Combat Badge"

"Dear Sir:

The Infantry has its Combat Infantry Badge, the medics have their Combat Medics Badge, the Artillery has a proposed Combat Artillery Badge, and what does Armor have? I can answer this as well as any armor man can also answer it, nothing.

The tank companies and the tank battalions are all either integral parts of the infantry regiments or attached to the infantry divisions. With this close association with the infantry it is only natural that Armor is working in a close support role. Also, we often find ourselves leading task forces that move many meters behind enemy lines. When the tanker returns from these missions, he finds that his infantry teammates, who haven't already received their Combat Infantry Badges, are lined up and have it presented to them.

What does the tanker get? Nothing for him because he can't qualify for the Combat Infantry Badge, and Armor has nothing to give him.

I firmly believe that a distinctive badge for Armor is a must. It would be a definite boost to the morale of all tankers in Korea. Also, it would show our brothers in arms that Armor also has its distinctive badge.

I think you are the people to start the ball rolling and am counting on you to keep it rolling."⁴ — Lieutenant William Q. Johnson, Tank Co., 32d Infantry Regiment, Korea

1952 — *ARMOR*, Letter to the Editor "Combat Recognition for Armor"

"Dear Sir:

While in Korea, this organization was employed in close support of infantry units. In almost every case, infantrymen and tankers shared equal hardships and danger. As we look at the situation, all elements of a tank-infantry team should be on an equal status.

The infantryman has his Combat badge to show for the effort he has expended, while the tanker, who was right up there with the foot soldier, has nothing. The men of this battalion keep asking, "Why?" and this is probably the same in any other armored unit. We cannot supply them with the answer.

The demand for recognition as combat tankers is so great that B Company has submitted a suggested design for a Combat Tanker's Badge. The drawing is by Corporal Pryor C. Mixon, Jr.

We are forwarding the drawing to you in the hope that you may be able to supply us with an answer. Or you may be able to give some publicity to the fact that of the three combat arms of the U.S. Army, Infantry, Armor, and Artillery, only the infantryman has a distinctive insignia to show he has been in combat.

Any aid that you may be able to give us in our crusade for recognition as 'Combat Tankers' will be greatly appreciated."⁵ Sincerely yours, Lieutenant Colonel Victor B. Fox, 70th Tank Battalion, Korea

1953 — *ARMOR*, Letter to the Editor "Combat Tanker's Badge"

"Dear Sir:

I write this letter to you in the hopes that you can supply the information I desire. Since my arrival in Korea, I have been as-

signed to a tank battalion and most of my combat time has been as a tanker.

The infantry has a combat badge to show their recognition of being an infantry soldier in combat. Has the armor branch adopted anything similar to the infantry? I have heard various stories from armor men and some say that we have what is known as a combat tankers' badge. Is there any authorization for such an award?

Hoping that you can answer my questions or direct me to the proper source for this information. — Corporal Ronald Schneider, 7th Recon. Co., 7th Div., Korea

*Editor's Note: *A check with the Pentagon reveals that there is no authorization for the wearing of a Combat Tanker's badge at the present time. If we hear anything to the contrary we will be only too happy to report it to you.**⁶

1964 — *ARMOR* Reconnoitering Section "Combat Tanker's Badge"

"For some time the question of establishing a Tanker's Badge similar to the Infantryman's Badge has been under formal discussion by armor types throughout the Army. In recent months, this discussion has been more pronounced and, with this in mind, the U.S. Armor Association at its annual meeting held at Fort Knox passed a resolution that would request the Department of the Army to award a tankers' badge.

Why is there not a Tanker's Badge? We have never seen a satisfactory answer to this question. Surely, there can be no argument about the precedent, for we have an Infantryman's Badge, the Medical Badge, the Parachutist's Badge in three categories, the Army Aviator's Badge in three categories, the Glider Badge, and the Diver's Badge in four categories. In addition, there is the Ranger Tab as a distinctive identification. These badges are awarded according to regulations in recognition of hazards and hardships, for special qualifications, or for completion of certain courses of training.

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ARMOR does not want to detract from the skills and courage of the Infantryman, or the Parachutist, or the Medical Aidman, or the Aviator, or the Diver because they wear a distinctive badge, but is not the tankers in the same category as these fellow soldiers and should he not also be allowed to display his skill as they do? We received a letter from Lieutenant Colonel John F. Hooks, Fort Hood, sometime ago and we quote in part: 'We in Armor have a proud and glorious heritage. In the early days the cavalryman was distinctive in his dress, and I'm sure that tankers of World War I had some distinctive marking or clothing. During World War II, the tankers had the privilege of a distinctive head gear (cap, garrison, with high crown) worn on the left side...Times have changed; and now, unless he belongs to an armored division, he has no mark of distinction other than the branch insignia he may wear.

The infantryman proudly and justly wears the Combat Infantryman's Badge, a badge that indicates that an individual has served in combat against an armed enemy. Those who have not been in combat may compete for the Expert Infantryman's Badge and

they too may be justly proud to wear it, because the skills are many and they must master them all before they have the privilege of wearing the Expert Infantryman's Badge.'

We feel the time is at hand for the establishment of a Tanker's Badge to be awarded under the same conditions as the stalwart foot soldier wears his."⁷ — Editor

1966 — *ARMOR*, Letter to the Editor

"Dear Sir:

The infantryman has the Expert Infantryman's Badge and the Combat Infantryman's Badge. The medical corpsman is authorized the Combat Medic Badge, and a recent addition, the Expert Medical Badge. DA has finally authorized a well-deserved set of crewman wings for those who share the hazards of flying the Army's aircraft. Drivers may earn the Expert Driver's Badge by showing their proficiency at the wheel. Proficiency with individual and crew served weapons, while no longer holding a monetary incentive, is shown by marksmanship medals. Skill with a wrench and screwdriver deserves the Mechanics Badge.

What's wrong with the Combat Arm of Decision? Are our men not entitled some way of showing that in fact they, too, were there? What about the tankers who excels in peacetime or combat?

"While we do not advocate making the uniform look like a Christmas tree or a Boy Scout merit badge sash, the awarding of a distinctive badge for excellence in peacetime and combat would lend much to the performance of and esprit of tankers."

While we do not advocate making the uniform look like a Christmas tree or a Boy Scout merit badge sash, the awarding of a distinctive badge for excellence in peacetime and combat would lend much to the performance of and esprit of tankers. Some attempts have been made within certain units to rectify this situation by initiating awards for performance on TCPC. We feel that this, and a combat badge, is a question worthy of consideration by OUR branch. For the Officers and Men of D Company, 16th Armor, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate), 1st Lieutenant John T. Wells, Vietnam

Editor's Note: In 1964 the U.S. Armor Association sent a resolution, favoring the adoption of a tankers' badge, to the Department of the Army for its consideration. This resolution was not favorably considered at that time. As far as the Editor knows, no effort has been made since that time for the establishment of a Tanker's Badge.⁸

1981 — *ARMOR*, Driver's Seat, CSM John Gillis "An Armored Badge Is Needed"

"On 03 June 1981, the following proposal for an Armored Force Badge and a Combat Armored Force Badge was approved by MG Louis C. Wagner, Jr., Commanding General, U.S. Army Armor Center and Fort Knox:

'This proposal addresses the need of establishing an Armored Force Badge and a Combat Armored Force Badge to be worn on the uniform of members of ground units of the Armored and Cavalry forces. ... The Combat Armored Force Badge would greatly enhance the pride and motivation of Armor and Cavalry soldiers who will be called upon to provide the major part of the combat power on the modern battlefield.'

In forwarding the proposal to the Commanding General of the Training and Doctrine Command, MG Wagner stated in his letter:

*'The leadership of Cavalry and Armor from at least 1833 has seen the need and sought approval for a distinctive insignia/badge. The evolution of Armor as the dominant force on the battlefield; historical recognition, worldwide, of 'heroes of Armor', such as Generals Chaffee, Patton, and Abrams; and the importance of the Armored Force in future planning of the U.S. Army with the Abrams Tank, Cavalry Fighting Vehicle, and Division 86, continue to state this need for a distinctive badge. In fact, it is more than a need, it is conclusive evidence of a requirement.'*⁹ — CSM, USAARMC & Fort Knox

1991 — ARMOR, Letter to the Editor "War Revives Armor Badge Issue"

"Dear Sir:

The resounding victory in the recent Gulf War validated to friend and foe alike the soundness of our Combined Arms Doctrine. More important, the necessity of heavy armor to that doctrine was clearly demonstrated. One might even go so far as to say that Armor was the keystone to the ground war victory. Accepting this fact as true, one question pops to mind: why is the importance of Armor, as a decisive combat element, not recognized with a combat qualification badge?

"Accepting this fact as true, one question pops to mind: why is the importance of Armor, as a decisive combat element, not recognized with a combat qualification badge?"

The argument over establishing a Combat Tanker's Badge has raged for several decades within the Army. The supremacy of the Combat Infantryman's Badge has been jealously maintained. The fact remains that we are a 'combined arms' Army. Why then do we continue to ignore the combat achievements of every branch except the Infantry?

The composition of American forces in the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations was based on heavy tank units: 1st Armored Division, 2d Armored Division (Forward), 3d Armored Division, 1st Cavalry Division, 2nd Cavalry Regiment, and the 3rd Cavalry Regiment. Why should the accomplishments of so many tankers not be recognized with a combat badge? And what about the tankers in the mechanized infantry divisions, such as the 24th and 1st Infantry? Why should the Bradley crew who rode next to them receive a Combat Infantryman's Badge, while they receive nothing? A combat patch is not enough. Tank crews deserve recognition with their own distinctive badge.

The criteria for the award should be very simple. If a soldier served on a tank in direct fire combat, he should be eligible for the reward, regardless of his MOS. Consequently, the turret mechanic pressed into service as a loader or gunner would be eligible for the badge.

The massive armor advances of Desert Storm are the first of their kind since the Allied sweeps through North Africa and Europe in World War II. If there was ever a time to adopt a Combat Tanker's Badge, it is NOW. The justification for it lies in the burned-out hulks of hundreds of Iraqi tanks and the thousands of tank tracks that criss-cross the Iraqi Desert. We must strike while the iron is hot and before the memory fades."¹⁰ — Ronald J. Bashista, 1LT, Armor, Erlangen, West Germany

1991 — U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell's Speech to the United States Senate

"Dear Secretary Stone:

This afternoon I introduced legislation providing for the establishment and award of an Armor Combat Tank Badge. I am enclosing a copy of my bill for your viewing.

The war to liberate Kuwait reaffirmed the necessity of armor forces on the world's battlefields. Engaged in the largest tank assault since World War II, U.S. and allied troops soundly defeated Saddam Hussein's war machine. Over 1,000 U.S. tanks and armor crews contributed to this impressive victory.

While the idea of an Armor Combat Tank Badge is not new, I think that it is clear its time has come. For several years, Armor Division Associations in Kentucky — and nationwide — have expressed their hopes for the creation of such a badge. Our armor soldiers are a special breed of warriors, and I am certain this badge will provide them with the recognition they so rightly deserve.

I hope that you will lend your support to my bill, and will join me in thanking all our armor soldiers."¹¹ — Mitch McConnell, U.S. Senator

13 September 1995 — Letter from GEN Reimer to Senator Mitch McConnell

"Dear Senator McConnell,

Thank you for your August 10 letter concerning establishment of a Combat Armor Badge.

The Combat Infantryman Badge (CIB) was established by the War Department on October 27, 1943. This award has provided special recognition of the unique role of the Army infantryman, the only soldier whose daily mission is to close with and destroy the enemy and to seize and hold terrain. There are basically three requirements for award of the CIB: the soldier must be an infantryman satisfactorily performing infantry duties, be assigned to an infantry unit during such time the unit is engaged in active ground combat, and actively participate in such ground combat. Additionally, since December 1989, Special Forces soldiers may be eligible for the CIB.

"This award has provided special recognition of the unique role of the Army infantryman, the only soldier whose daily mission is to close with and destroy the enemy and to seize and hold terrain."

The prestigious recognition given to the infantryman has been frequently reviewed and always protected. Since the establishment of the Combat and Expert Infantryman Badges in 1943, numerous proposals have been submitted to create insignia, badges, ribbons, medals, or other devices to acknowledge specific branches or elements of the Army, to include the Armor branch. With the exception of the Combat Medical Badge and the Expert Field Medical Badge, comparable badges have not been adopted. The Army has consistently declined to take any action that might detract from or lessen the prestige of the Combat Infantryman Badge, Combat Medical Badge, and Expert Infantryman and Medical Badges.

"The Army recognizes that the award of badges helps to promote esprit de corps, provides incentives to greater effort, and fosters morale and self esteem."

Soldiers of arms and services, other than infantry and medical, who attain a high level of technical skill and proficiency in a particular field, i.e., armor, signal, transportation, artillery, and engineer are eligible for appropriate decorations in recognition of their achievements and services in those fields. There are also

tabs, insignias, and other badges, which denote particular combat-related skills common to all soldiers and participation in a combat environment.

The Army recognizes that the award of badges helps to promote esprit de corps, provides incentives to greater effort, and fosters morale and self-esteem. However, Army policy has been very restrictive regarding the adoption of new badges. The objective of this policy is to protect the prestige and meaningfulness of existing badges and preclude uniform clutter. The current hierarchy of awards and decorations that can be used to recognize soldiers is considered adequate to reward soldiers at a level indicative of the performance rendered.

For the above reasons, the Army has neither created, nor does it support the creation of a special badge to recognize soldiers of the Armor branch or other branches. This policy in no way denigrates the invaluable and important contribution of soldiers involved in the armor field throughout the Army's history.

[Personal Comments handwritten by General Reimer at the bottom of the letter to Senator McConnell]: *Sincerely appreciate your interest. This is an issue that has been reviewed many times since I've been in Army. Results are always the same: CIB is special and we need to leave it that way. I am convinced this continues to be the case.*¹²

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— General Dennis Reimer

2001 — *ARMOR*, "Armor Soldiers in the Gulf Deserved Combat Badges, Too"

"Dear Sir:

I was extremely excited when I read the headline of the "Commander's Hatch" in the September-October issue — "The Combat Armor Badge." I thought to myself, finally an armor leader willing to stand up for the branch and the soldiers who represent the branch. I was devastated by MG Bell's stance.

He mentioned two points:

It will cause divisiveness. Has this happened in the Infantry Branch between what he called the 'haves and have-nots'? I think it has not. It has only added to the esprit de corps of that fine branch.

"It will cause divisiveness. Has this happened in the Infantry Branch between what he called the 'haves and have-nots'? I think it has not. It has only added to the esprit de corps of that fine branch."

Impact on the Army overall? The German Wehrmacht had a combat badge for all its branches; this seemed to work well for them, and I agree any soldier should be eligible for a combat-type badge.

I cannot describe to you the feelings I had trying to answer the questions of my young soldiers in 4-64 Armor after they witnessed our mortars receiving their CIBs: 'Sir, they didn't even fire a shot. ... "We were in front of them," etc. I believe our mortarmen deserved this award, I also think our 19Ds, 19Ks, and medics also deserved a badge.

At a time when the services are facing retention and recruiting concerns, I would think another bonus in terms of a much-deserved award would only help morale. I know morale is down in the Armor force; I still talk to the many friends I have on active duty, and they are not happy.

I also wonder if his stance would be different if he had been in the Gulf. I hope he becomes a leader in this issue for our well-deserved Armor veterans."¹³ — Todd A. Mayer, Cincinnati, Ohio

"The CIB was designed to enhance morale and the prestige of the 'Queen of Battle.' Then Secretary of War Henry Stinson said, 'It is high time we recognize in a personal way the skill and heroism of the American infantry.'"

Understanding the Debate

The key to understanding the history of the Combat and Expert Armor Badge debate is to examine the evolution and emergence of a few badges and medals since the inception of the Air Medal in World War II. The Air Medal has been deemed by many to be the catalyst for the conception of the CIB, Expert Infantry Badge (EIB), Combat Medical Badge, and Expert Field Medical Badge (EFMB).

Air Medal. Secretary of War Lewis Stimson, in a 09 March 1942 letter to the Director, Bureau of Budget, proposed to establish an Air Medal. Secretary Stimson's request was two-fold: he was concerned about the morale of pilots and flight crews in combat operations, and he did not want to belittle the prestige of the Distinguished Flying Cross. Stimson states, "The Distinguished Flying Cross is available only for heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight...it is desired not to cheapen the Distinguished Flying Cross by awarding it for achievement not bordering on the heroic. It is, however, important to reward personnel for meritorious service."

Herein lies the foundation for the emergence of the CIB. After the official authorization of the Air Medal, arguments were made on behalf of establishing a distinctive badge or award to recognize the suffering and sacrifices of the infantryman. An interesting account of the birth of the CIB can be found in U.S. Army Regulation (AR) 600-8-22, *Military Awards*.¹⁴

Combat Infantryman Badge. AR 600-8-22, *Military Awards*, describes, in detail, the Combat Infantryman Badge's inception:

"a. History.

(1) The Combat Infantryman Badge (CIB) was established by the War Department on 27 October 1943. Lieutenant General Lesley J. McNair, then the Army Ground Forces commanding general, was instrumental in its creation. He originally recommended that it be called the 'fighter badge.' The CIB was designed to enhance morale and the prestige of the 'Queen of Battle.' Then Secretary of War Henry Stinson said, 'It is high time we recognize in a personal way the skill and heroism of the American infantry.'

(2) Originally, the Regimental Commander was the lowest level at which the CIB could be approved and its award was retroactive to 7 December 1941. There was a separate provision for badge holders to receive a \$10 per month pay stipend, which was rescinded in 1948. Several factors led to the creation of the CIB, some of the most prominent factors are as follows:

(a) The need for large numbers of well-trained infantry to bring about a successful conclusion to the war and the already critical shortage of infantrymen.

"Of all soldiers, it was recognized that the infantryman continuously operated under the worst conditions and performed a mission which was not assigned to any other soldier or unit."

(b) Of all soldiers, it was recognized that the infantryman continuously operated under the worst conditions and performed a mission which was not assigned to any other soldier or unit.

(c) The infantry, a small portion of the total Armed Forces, was suffering the most casualties while receiving the least public recognition.

(d) General Marshall's well known affinity for the ground forces soldier and, in particular, the infantryman. All these factors led to establishing the CIB, an award that would provide special recognition of the unique role of the Army infantryman, the only soldier whose daily mission is to close with and destroy the enemy and to seize and hold terrain. The badge was intended as an inducement for individuals to join the infantry while serving as a morale booster for infantrymen serving in every theater.

"In developing the CIB, the War Department did not dismiss out of hand or ignore the contributions of other branches. Their vital contributions to the overall war effort were certainly noted, but it was decided that other awards and decorations were sufficient to recognize their contributions."

(3) In developing the CIB, the War Department did not dismiss out of hand or ignore the contributions of other branches. Their vital contributions to the overall war effort were certainly noted, but it was decided that other awards and decorations were sufficient to recognize their contributions. From the beginning, Army leaders have taken care to retain the badge for the unique purpose for which it was established and to prevent the adoption of any other badge, which would lower its prestige. At the close of World War II, our largest war in which the armor and artillery played key roles in the ground campaigns, a review was conducted of the CIB criteria with consideration being given to creating either additional badges or authorizing the badge to cavalry and armor units. The review noted that any change in policy would detract from the prestige of the badge.

b. Intent.

(1) There are basically three requirements for award of the CIB. The soldier must be an infantryman satisfactorily performing infantry duties, must be assigned to an infantry unit during such time as the unit is engaged in active ground combat, and must actively participate in such ground combat. Campaign or battle credit alone is not sufficient for award of the CIB.

(2) The definition or requirement to be 'engaged in active ground combat' has generated much dialogue over the years as to the original intent of the CIB.

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(a) The 1943 War Department Circular required infantrymen to demonstrate 'satisfactory performance of duty in ac-

tion against the enemy.' The operative words 'in action' connoted actual combat.

(b) A War Department determination in October 1944 specified that 'action against the enemy' for purposes of award of the CIB was to be interpreted as 'ground combat against enemy ground forces.'

(c) In 1948, the regulation governing badges stipulated that 'battle participation credit is not sufficient; the unit must have been in contact with the enemy.' This clearly indicated that an exchange of hostile fire or equivalent personal exposure was the intent of the Army leadership.

(d) In 1963 and 1965, HQDA messages to the senior Army commander in the Southeast Asia theater of operations authorized award of the CIB to otherwise qualified personnel 'provided they are personally present and under fire.' U.S. Army Vietnam regulations went so far as to require documentation of the type and intensity of enemy fire encountered by the soldier. The intended requirement to be 'personally present and under fire' has not changed."¹⁵

Combat Medical Badge. Paragraph 8-7, Army Regulation 600-8-22, *Military Awards*, also describes the Combat Medical Badge:

"a. History.

(1) Originally established as the Medical Badge, the Combat Medical Badge (CMB) was created by the War Department on 1 March 1945. It could be awarded to officers, warrant officers, and enlisted men of the Medical Department assigned or attached to the medical detachment of infantry regiments, infantry battalions, and elements thereof designated as infantry in tables of organization or tables of organization and equipment. Its evolution stemmed from a requirement to recognize medical aid-men who shared the same hazards and hardships of ground combat on a daily basis with the infantry soldier. Though established almost a year and a half after the CIB, it could be awarded retroactively to 7 December 1941 to fully qualified personnel.

"[The Combat Medical Badge's] evolution stemmed from a requirement to recognize medical aid-men who shared the same hazards and hardships of ground combat on a daily basis with the infantry soldier."

(2) Like the CIB, the Regimental Commander was the lowest level at which the CMB could be approved and it also carried with it a separate provision for enlisted badge holders to receive a \$10 per month pay stipend.

(3) The CMB was awarded to medical department personnel assigned or attached to infantry units of Allied Forces when duties performed were identical to those performed by medical personnel assigned or attached to U.S. Forces.

(4) The CMB could also be awarded to U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force medical personnel provided they met all the requirements of Army medics.

(5) Effective 20 December 1989, special forces personnel possessing Military Occupational Specialty 18D (Special Operations Medical Sergeant) became qualified for award of the CMB provided they were otherwise qualified.

(6) In 1991, the Chief of Staff, Army authorized a limited expansion of CMB eligibility, to include medical personnel assigned or attached to armor and ground cavalry units provided they meet all other qualifying criteria. This expansion was ret-

roactive to 17 January 1991 to cover the period of Operation DES-ERT STORM.

b. Intent.

(1) The CMB was created as a 'companion' badge to the CIB with criteria for its award intended to parallel that of the CIB. It was designed to provide recognition to the field medic who accompanies the infantryman into battle and shares with him the experiences unique to the infantry in combat. There was never any intention to award the CMB to all medical personnel who serve in a combat zone or imminent danger area, that is, a division-level medical company supporting a maneuver brigade.

(2) As with the CIB, the infantry unit to which the medical personnel are assigned or attached must engage the enemy in active ground combat. Since inception, the intent of the Department of the Army regarding this requirement has been that medical personnel must be personally present and under fire in order to be eligible for the awarding of the badge. So stringent was this requirement during the Vietnam era that recommending officials were required to document the place (in six digit coordinates), time, type, and intensity of fire to which the proposed recipient was exposed. This fact naturally precludes the awarding of the badge to those medical personnel who accompany infantry units into a potential engagement area, but do not come under enemy fire.

"As with the CIB, the infantry unit to which the medical personnel are assigned or attached must engage the enemy in active ground combat."

(3) Over the years, there has been some confusion concerning the phrase "in direct support of an infantry unit." The CMB is intended for, and awarded to, those medical personnel who accompany the infantryman into combat. The Army has never approved of deviations from this purpose and its restrictive criteria. During the World War II era, battalion and regiment level medical detachments and companies provided medical support for combat infantry units. These medical personnel and units were termed direct support. This concept lasted until Vietnam. Today, medical personnel are assigned as organic personnel to infantry companies and are regarded as participants as opposed to being categorized as those providing direct medical support. For example, medical personnel serving in division-level medical companies, ground ambulance and medical clearing companies, mobile-Army surgical hospital (MASH), combat-support hospital (CSH), field hospitals, and aero-medical evacuation units are not eligible for the CMB. The sole criterion, which qualifies medical personnel for award of the CMB, is to be assigned or attached to an infantry unit engaged in active ground combat. Medical personnel, other than those medics organic to infantry units, may qualify only if they serve as medical personnel accompanying infantrymen. Conceivably, this could occur if an infantry unit lost all its medics and, as a temporary or permanent mea-

"So stringent was this requirement during the Vietnam era that recommending officials were required to document the place (in six digit coordinates), time, type, and intensity of fire to which the proposed recipient was exposed."

sure, medical personnel were attached to an infantry unit, but remained assigned to a hospital or other non-infantry unit."¹⁶

Bronze Star. The CIB was heavily supported by the War Department in World War II to help compensate the "infantryman"

"The fact that the ground troops, infantry in particular, lead miserable lives of extreme discomfort and are the ones who must close in personal combat with the enemy, makes the maintenance of their morale of great importance. The award of the Air Medal has had an adverse reaction on the ground troops, particularly the Infantry Riflemen who are now suffering the heaviest losses, air or ground, in the Army, and enduring the greatest hardships."

for fighting, living, and enduring harsh battlefield conditions. The CIB was meant to be a "morale booster," a token to let the ground fighter know that their efforts did not go unnoticed. During the war, General George C. Marshall campaigned for the approval of yet another decoration to honor wartime sacrifices. His efforts are described in a Bronze Star information circular:

"5. Background:

a. General George C. Marshall, in a memorandum to President Roosevelt dated February 3, 1944, wrote: 'The fact that the ground troops, infantry in particular, lead miserable lives of extreme discomfort and are the ones who must close in personal combat with the enemy, makes the maintenance of their morale of great importance. The award of the Air Medal has had an adverse reaction on the ground troops, particularly the Infantry Riflemen who are now suffering the heaviest losses, air or ground, in the Army, and enduring the greatest hardships.' The Air Medal had been adopted two years earlier to raise airmen's morale.

b. President Roosevelt authorized the Bronze Star Medal by Executive Order 9419, dated 4 February 1944, retroactive to 7 December 1941. This authorization was announced in War Department Bulletin No. 3, dated 10 February 1944. The Executive Order was amended by President Kennedy, per Executive Order 11046, dated 24 August 1962, to expand the authorization to include those serving with friendly forces.

c. As a result of a study conducted in 1947, the policy was implemented that authorized the retroactive award of the Bronze Star Medal to soldiers who had received the Combat Infantryman Badge or the Combat Medical Badge during World War II. The basis for doing this was that the badges were awarded only to soldiers who had borne the hardships, which resulted in General Marshall's support of the Bronze Star Medal. Both badges required a recommendation by the commander and a citation in orders."¹⁷

The Disparity Syndrome

A trend of disparity has continued to develop in the adopting U.S. Army badges since the inception of the CIB, CMB, EIB and EFMB. "Disparity," or its root word, "disparate" is defined by Webster's dictionary as, "One of two or more things so unequal or unlike that they cannot be compared with each other." Since 1943, when the CIB and EIB were instituted, approximately 39 distinctive badges, tabs, and identification badges have been adopted by the U.S. Army — some have since been rescinded, such as nuclear and glider. Of these, as General Reimer states, "...tabs, insignias, and other badges, which denote particular combat-related skills common to all soldiers and participation in a combat environment," Armor and Cavalry Officers, 19K and 19D scouts and tankers (not forgetting a large portion of artillery, engineer, air defense, and other supporting branches), may qualify for a very small percentage based on MOS restrictions and the mission essential task lists of Armor and Cavalry units. Integrating MOSs and units into our "combined arms team" amplify these small percentages.

This situation continues to be the case in Operation Iraqi Freedom where CIB ceremonies are being held for infantry soldiers

who are attached to Armor units while their “brothers in combat arms” watch on. Consider this — a scout platoon is out in front of the task force in up-armored or soft-skinned HMMWVs and taking heavy enemy fire as they provide the eyes and ears for their comrades who are following in M1A1s and Bradleys. Under current regulations, the only one eligible for a combat badge would be the 11-series soldiers in the task force.

Sadly, this scenario is not an isolated incident, and it is not restricted to recent combat operations. This has happened time and time again. Esprit de corps alone will not rectify the potential effect on morale for the armored force. It is true that the sometime cavalier armored force retains its traditions in the form of spurs, Stetsons, and tanker boots, but these symbols do not address the issue of recognition in peacetime and at war.

A closer examination of AR 600-8-22, Chapters 7-21 and 22, shows us that there are two more recognitions given in addition to the CIB and CMB in the form of the Combat Infantry Streamer and the Combat Medical Streamer. The Combat Infantry Streamer criteria states (medical streamer criteria is identical): “When 65 percent or more of the TOE strength of a separate infantry or ranger platoon, infantry or ranger company, battalion or brigade has been awarded the Combat Infantryman Badge (CIB) during military operations against an opposing foreign force in war, or in any military action where the CIB is authorized, the unit will be awarded a Combat Infantry Streamer. The streamer is authorized to be awarded to a unit for each separate war or military operation in which the requirements prescribed herein have been met. Each additional award will be represented by a star embroidered on the streamer.”¹⁸

The accolades do not end with the CIB and CMB combat streamers. If one looks further in Chapters 7-26 and 7-27, AR 600-8-22, it provides for additional expert infantry and medical streamers for over 65 percent of the units achieving either the CIB/CMB or the EIB/EFMB during war or a testing period.

Final Thoughts

Did my journey end at the Patton Museum when I held the original tanker badge? I feel in some way that I have touched the generation of World War I tankers that fought so hard to get a tanker badge for their World War II comrades and all tankers to follow. Holding that small metallic symbol made me realize that as an armored force, we are not only at the crossroads of an Army-wide transformation, but we are also at the beginning of another opportunity to finally take a stand and do what is right for the great tankers and cavalymen we follow and emulate in method and practice; what is right for the veterans, active and retired, who have “laid it on the line” in the combined arms battles of the 20th and 21st centuries; and finally, what is right for the force to enhance our morale and esprit de corps to lead the Army into the next generation.

There will always be doubters that question the parameters of adopting a distinctive armor badge for war and peacetime — questions that will no doubt address if armor veterans will retroactively receive the CAB for their combat time. My answer is, “yes.” The Army has had no issues of denigrating the value of an award by issuing it after the fact. The tears of the World War II Sherman tanker, the Korean War Chaffee tanker, the Vietnam War M113 or M48 tanker, the Panama Invasion Sheridan tanker, the Desert Storm M1A1 or M2 Bradley tanker, and the Operation Iraq Freedom M1A2 or M3 Bradley tanker being awarded a Combat Armor Badge alongside infantry comrades will be real.

Should we limit combat and expert badges to only armor, infantry, and medical corps? The answer from every leader and

soldier in today’s combined arms family” should be a resounding, “no.” Will it cheapen current and future badges by allowing all Army branches to recognize their soldiers? No! We, as a military, rely on each other more than ever. As a result of our recent military endeavors, we know from the common soldier to the most senior commander that the 71-Lima personnel administrative clerk, the 92-Yankee supply sergeant, the 11-Bravo, 19-Kilo, and 19-Delta combat soldier can all be combat multipliers on the contemporary operating environment battlefield of today. The bottom line is we risk our lives to wear this uniform. We should break the mindset and let everyone put on their uniform in the morning and get that warm feeling of seeing a distinctive insignia or strive to be the next person to sew it on.

I do want to enforce my support for all soldiers awarded the CIB, the CMB, the EIB, and the EFMB and thank them for their sacrifices, some ultimate, and congratulate others on earning their badges. My purpose is to draw attention to decades of disparity, rather than attack those who have rightly earned recognition.

In closing, I pause to remember an infantryman hero in my life, my grandfather, Private First Class Gilbert Monien. My journey to find the “truth” about the tanker badge helped me discover his CIB and Bronze Star. I think that he and his World War II “combined arms comrades” are smiling down on us. Thanks Grandpa.



Notes

¹CPT Ronald M. Cross, “Why Not A Combat Badge For Armor?” *ARMOR*, May-June 1969, pp. 22-23.

²Honorable William G. Bray, 7th District Indiana Congressman, 1949 Personal Letter, Patton Museum Archives.

³World Wars Tank Corps Association, “Why Not A Combat Tankers Badge,” *Tankerine*, February-March 1953.

⁴LT William Q. Johnson, “Armor Combat Badge,” Letter to the Editor, *ARMOR*, January-February 1952, p. 2.

⁵LTC Victor B. Fox, “Combat Recognition For Armor,” Letter to the Editor, *ARMOR*, July-August 1952, p. 2.

⁶CPL Ronald Schneider, “Combat Tanker’s Badge,” Letter to the Editor, *ARMOR*, November-December 1953, p. 2.

⁷Editorial, Reconnoitering Section, “Combat Tanker’s Badge,” *ARMOR*, July-August 1964, p. 43.

⁸1LT John T. Wells, Letter to The Editor, *ARMOR*, November-December 1966, pp. 2-3.

⁹CSM John W. Gillis, “An Armored Force Badge Is Needed,” *Driver’s Seat*, *ARMOR*, September-October 1981, pp. 9-10.

¹⁰1LT Ronald J. Bashista, “War Revives Armor Badge Issue,” Letter to the Editor, *ARMOR*, July-August 1991, pp. 5, 49.

¹¹Senator Mitch McConnell, Congressional Record-Senate S7899, Speech to United States Senate, Secretary, Department of the Army, The Pentagon, Washington, D.C., 17 June 1991.

¹²General Dennis J. Reimer, U.S. Army Chief of Staff, Personal Letter to Senator Mitch McConnell, 13 September 1995, Patton Museum Archives.

¹³Todd A. Mayer, “Armor Soldiers in the Gulf Deserved Combat Badges Too,” Letter to the Editor, *ARMOR*, January-February 2001, p. 50.

¹⁴Headquarters, Department of the Army, U.S. Army Regulation 600-8-22, *Military Awards*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 25 February 1995.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 50-52.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

¹⁷Online Research, <<http://usmilitary.about.com/library/milinfo/armedal/blbsm.htm>> 2003.

¹⁸AR 600-8-22, *Military Awards*, pp. 46-47.

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Combat Tanker Badge 1918



CAB 1953



EAB 1953



CAB 1986



EAB 1986

History of Proposed Badges From 1952 to Present



CAB 1991



EAB 1991



CAB 1952



CAB 1989

Author's Proposed Badges

CAB



EAB



Vietnam CAB 1966